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occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house is purified after their departure.

The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it from normal participation in social life.

Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālé poré* in which a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath. During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects in a condition of normal ritual status.

The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and the members of the particular household. After the corpse is removed, both the house and the members of the household have to be purified.

Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp. The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This lamp is called *nellakki boḷuk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tūg boḷuk* or hanging lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbaré kōṇé*) and the kitchen (*umbaḷa mané*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food

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783 is specially so where the structural distance between the two castes is very great. In Malabar and Coorg the ban on contact between different castes has been elaborately systematized. People belonging to two different castes have to maintain a certain minimum distance between them, and failure to do so results in the member of the higher caste being polluted. *Tīṇḍu polé* means the pollution that results from the failure to maintain the requisite distance between two people belonging to different castes.

A man is in a condition of ritual impurity in relation to a member of a higher caste while he is in a condition of ritual purity towards a member of a lower caste. The concepts of ritual purity and impurity systematize and maintain the structural distance between different castes. Caste hierarchy, on the other hand, makes these concepts relative, except with reference to castes at either extreme. The Brahmin is in a condition of purity in relation to all other castes, while the Untouchable is in a condition of ritual impurity to them. One of the most important Untouchable castes are the Poleyas (*polé+ya*). Holeyas are an important Untouchable caste of the Kannaḍa country, and Pulayans of Malabar. The names of each of these contain the local term for pollution.

761 844 Events like birth and death result in polluting the *okka* in which the event has occurred, and certain other relatives. The pollution resulting from birth is milder than the pollution consequent on death. But in both cases pollution affects only the concerned kindred, and it is the means by which concern is defined and made known to everyone.

841 A woman is in a condition of *polé* for three days during her periods, and she becomes pure only on the fourth day after a bath in the morning. Formerly, the women of an *okka* had to live in an outhouse, at a little distance from the main building, during their periods. They had to maintain a certain distance from other members of the *okka*, and from other people in a condition of normal ritual status. They were specially required to keep away from the ancestor-shrine and from the cobra-platform. The cobra-deity was specially sensitive to defilement, and it was believed that if a woman approached the cobra-platform during her periods, the wrath of the deity would descend on the *okka* of which she was a member.

Coorg women do not nowadays observe any restrictions during their periods. This is surprising as elsewhere in south India these restrictions are still in force.

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with a condition of ritual purity. It is obvious that in the above instances physical dirt has been identified with ritual impurity. Purification consists in taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. Dirt, then, is seen as ritual impurity, and cleanliness as ritual purity. It is necessary, however, to stress that they are ritual and not natural states.

Birth and death both result in ritual impurity for the entire household for several days. This ritual impurity will not disappear even if the impure person has a dozen baths a day. But, once the prescribed period is over, the individual attains his normal ritual status after a bath. It is necessary to stress that ritual purity is fundamentally different from cleanliness, though they overlap frequently. A simple association of ritual purity with cleanliness, and ritual impurity with dirtiness, would be a neat arrangement, but it would falsify the facts. One comes across ritually pure robes which are very dirty, and snow-white clothes which are ritually impure.

A corpse is ritually impure and contact with it results in pollution. The crow, which is a scavenger bird, and is everywhere associated with death, is also impure. The spirits of dead ancestors assume the forms of crows on certain ritual occasions when they are propitiated. The conclusion of funeral rites is marked everywhere by the offer of balls of rice to the dead man's spirit. These balls are kept either on the roof of the house or on the ground at some distance from the house. If the crows fall to these balls soon, it is believed that the dead man is satisfied. Delay in the arrival of the crows indicates that the dead man is dissatisfied.

If the crows perch on a roof and caw, the death of someone under that roof is presaged. A man who sees two crows mating will die soon after unless he sends a false message announcing his death to his kinsmen. Nowadays it is not unusual for a person who has seen two crows mating to send a telegram announcing his death to his kinsmen.[1] The mating of crows means their increase, and the man who sees it is likely to die. The way he can counteract this is by announcing his death as soon as he has seen the crows mate. The ends of justice are met by such an announcement.

If a crow's droppings fall on a person, he or she will have to dip in a tank or river a thousand times. This is extremely inconvenient,

[1] Needless to say, this causes the unfortunate kinsfolk a considerable amount of worry and suffering.

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hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity Subramaṇya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subramaṇya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya, some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly found in south India.

The identification of cobras with Subramaṇya demonstrates the way in which Sanskritic Hinduism operates. The worship of cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya provides a door for the entry of Sanskritic Hinduism. People who until then had only been worshipping cobras came to know about Subramaṇya, the son of Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramaṇya's birth, which is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to other gods like Vishṇu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya became popular, and these shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskritic Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskritic Hinduism.

Stones representing Pūda and Guḷika are frequently found in the compound of a Coorg's house. Pūda is the Tamil corruption of the Sanskritic *bhūta*, which means a spirit. Pūda is frequently one of the deities in a village temple.

Guḷika in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He is also referred to as Māndi.

Guḷika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see Guḷika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and Coorg show the position of Guḷika, and this is said to indicate when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take place in a Coorg's house it is customary to plant a stone called Mrityu Guḷika (death Guḷika). This is believed to put an end to the deaths.

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

778 Besides the many groves set apart in each Nád for some object of worship, but chiefly for *Ayappa-dévaru*, there are some extensive forests, called *Dévara-kádu*, which are untrodden by human foot and superstitiously reserved for the abodes or hunting grounds of deified heroic ancestors. These forests are: the *Iggudappa-dévara-kádu* in Pádinalknád, the *Chómamale* in Katiednád and the *Iruli-bane* in Kuyingherinád.

82 Another annual sacrifice every house has to offer to a
776 peculiar divinity called *Gulika*. This is an inviaible constel-
782 lation or star, belonging both to the order of planets and to
that of the zodiacal stars (it is, as the people say, a son of
[791] Shani or Saturn). No mortal eye sees it. The astrologer
only knows the Gulika and its power, especially over the sick.
A stone is placed for the Gulika at the foot of some tree
possessed of a milky juice. There the Coorg offers every
year fowls, cocoanuts and a little brandy in a dish of plantain-
• [761] leaves to his tutelary numem. In cases of frequent deaths
in a family, a second Gulika, called *Mrityu-Gulika* (death-
gulika) is worshipped.

778 Another object of solemn ceremonies are the *Nátas*, the
825 spots on which cobra capellas have finished their course of
terrestrial life. According to Coorg lore, the cobra capella 1 A
lives a thousand years! When it has passed the meridian of
its long life, its body begins to shrink and to brighten, till it
shines like silver, and measures three feet or less at the age
of six or seven hundred years. Still later, the reptile shines
like gold, and is only one foot in length. At last it shrinks
to the size of a finger. Then it will some day fly up high
into the air, die and sink down upon the ground, where it
[791] disappears altogether. No man sees it, but, of course, the
[753] Kanya knows the important secret, which he will communi-
cate for a consideration to the proprietor of the land. Should
any human being, unawares, set foot upon the hallowed spot,
incurable disease of the skin will break out upon his person,

1 A [Errata: This should read "cobra di capella." See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 493, -- Analyst]

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

and the poor wretch will rot away by degrees. To prevent such disasters, the Náta place is marked by a little stone enclosure. During the month of Scorpio (November—December) a lamp is lighted every evening to the Náta, and cocoanuts are offered as oblations.

c. Astrology and Sorcery.

The ministers of Coorg superstition, the Kanyas, Panikas, Malcyas and Bannas make a handsome livelihood. The Kanyas find much work for the conjuring confraternity, dependent, in a great measure, upon their friendly patronage. The Kanya (astrologer) has complete mastery over the minds and, to a great extent, over the pockets of the credulous Coorgs. For a consideration in the shape of a purse of rupees, he writes the horoscope of the individuals who apply to him. Such is his cleverness, that he requires only to know the name of a person, in order to calculate the year, month, day and hour of his nativity. He is also the oracle of the Coorgs in cases of sorcery and witchcraft. It is believed by the Coorgs, that misfortunes, such as diseases of men or cattle, and deaths in the family or the herd, rarely come upon them in the natural order of things. The knowledge of an all-ruling Providence seems to have no place in their minds. Every severe affliction or great loss is ascribed to magic art or "an enemy hath done this." To find out the author of the mischief, and to induce or force him to keep the peace, is the only method that suggests itself to such people for obtaining deliverance from trouble. Application is made to some famous Kanya, who consults his books and caudies (little shells used for dice), and discovers the secret enemy's place, house, stature, age, etc. The man is called before a Panchâyat, and the case is discussed in the Parpatigára's Cutchéri. If things are not settled before this tribunal, the parties go to the Subadar, and frequently the quarrel is carried before the